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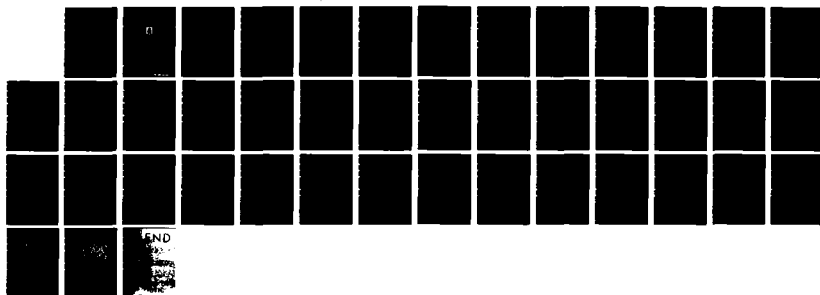
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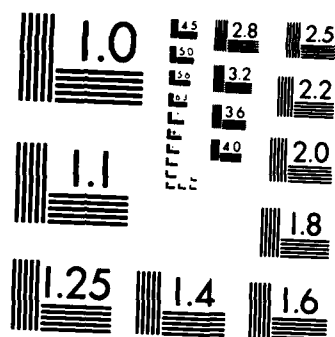
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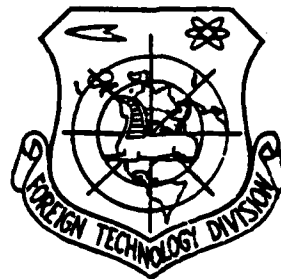
# FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION



ROCKET TABLET

by

W. Lixian



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## EDITED TRANSLATION

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A-1

## ROCKET TABLET

Wang Lixin

.....Long ago during the 1950's, many comrades resolutely came to this desolate and uninhibited strip of Gobi sand, worked despite wind and rain and broke ground to start construction and build our army's first modernized strategic weapons launching test base. It now already possesses considerable scale..... We cannot forget the blood and sweat of the comrades who built the base especially those who gave their lives.....

The above is a quote from comrade Nie Rongqin's October 1983 letter of congratulations written to a certain base group of the National Defense Science and Engineering Committee on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its construction.

Strive to scale heights in science and technology, usher in new prospects in base construction (a prompt by comrade Yang Shangkun).

The joys and danger of the east wind are released, the sound of thunder shakes heaven. Perilous peaks are bravely climbed, strengthen the iron and copper walls (a prompt by comrade Zhang Aiping).

This is a vast and desolate world, this is a strip of miraculous land! How many struggling dramas full of power and grandeur were cheered, resisted and played out by our Chinese sons and daughters of ancient times. The famous Han dynasty general Li Guang was quickly cured of disease and led an army out to the frontier where it withstood the Xiongnu; Li Ling and 3,000 officers and men fought to the bitter end and died and only their bodies were taken captive.... When the wheels of history turned to the autumn of 1954, following the camel bell sounds streaming in, several tens of thousands of our rocket officers

and men, a group enormous and powerful, marched into this land soaked with the fresh blood of our ancestors.

This place is about to become the "Kennedy Center" (Note: the American aerospace center) and "Baikenuer Launching Site" (Note: the first rocket launching site of the Soviet Union) of China.

This place was about to become the birthplace of the Chinese people's first rocket baby.

#### Section One

In this eternal wasteland called the "Chinese Siberia" by Soviet Union specialists, the age-old dreary song "The wind blows and the rocks run, grass does not grow anywhere, the flight of birds are cut off in the sky, the large wild goose does not dwell here." Then, in the vast sea of sand, aside from the special railway being built by engineering troops, a lone bathing pool and a dance hall's specialist hostel, there seems to be nothing. The problems of the temporary feeding, clothing, housing and use of an army of several tens of thousands of soldiers were difficult to resolve; the troop organization could only dwell in a lamasery. Our first aerospace city began from this old temple and the tents.

"Everything to serve the specialists" was the most resounding slogan at that time. According to the rocket troop's party committee division of work, the work of receiving and taking care of the Soviet specialists fell on Assistant Commander Li Fuze. In order to care for the specialists, Li Fuze racked his brains and did all of the leg work.

Hearing that the Soviet specialists did not eat cold meat and preferred to eat fresh calf meat, he specially ran to Luo Ruiqing, Deputy Chief of the General Staff and using soft tactics

and tough pestering said he wanted an American aircraft obtained on the battlefield to transport goods from Lanzhou, Xian, Beijing, Guangzhou and Hainan Island. One trip was made per week and the goods were sent to the dining hall of the specialists.

Hearing that the Soviet specialists were not accustomed to Chinese food, he ran off directly to the home of the Mayor of Beijing and requested two Western cuisine cooks from a hotel. At the time, finding a Western cuisine cook was even more difficult than finding a cadre and the mayor shook his head and said: "There are still not enough in Beijing." He then found a Harbin municipal Party committee secretary and relying on the reputation of the old comrade-in-arms he actually "dug up" four Western cuisine cooks.

Hearing the Soviet specialist reactions of the cultural life in the Gobi sands is too dull as there are no movies, no plays to see, no parties..... he toughened his scalp and called together some women for a song and dance troupe. The women shouted in opposition and he patiently exhorted: "This is political work and to allow the Soviet specialists to help us produce rockets early, you must put up with a little inconvenience." From this, the songs and dances wound around through the great desert.....

In the autumn of 1958, a train carrying Soviet supported rockets pulled into the vast Gobi.

At the solemn welcoming meeting, Assistant commander Li Fuze said: "..... We have adopted a son from an older brother and whether it is a relative or not they are still our own. We want to treat it the same as our own son. We can only allow it to grow in the cradle but cannot allow it to die in the cradle...."

According to the Sino-Soviet National Defense Science and Technology Agreement, aside from supplying certain rockets to



China, at the same time the Soviet Union was to send specialists to impart launching technology. At that time, a rocket was sent to the troops and the major shortage was the propellant. Its relation to whether or not the rocket can be launched normally is not inferior to the blood of a baby.

A chemical engineering plant in Jilin Province was eager to help in the emergency of China's aerospace industry and under the difficulty of a lack of materials, scientific and technical personnel immediately developed and produced China's first fuel propellant and it was found to be completely up to standard after laboratory tests. When Li Fuze received the laboratory tests, he immediately went to find the head of the specialist advisory group Qierkuofu.

Qierkuofu was at first startled and afterwards happily said: "First put it here and we will send people back to the Soviet Union to check it."

However, ten days passed and there was no news; one month passed and still no news.....

Li Fuze could then not restrain himself and one evening he pulled Commander Sun Jixian out and together with himself went to the hostel of the specialists.

In the dance hall under a dim suspended lamp the specialists were dancing around to the music of the "Blue Danube". Li Fuze went forward and called to Qierkuofu: "We would like to ask about the laboratory tests....."

Qierkuofu was at first silent and then led Sun Jixian and Li Fuze into his bedroom and distressfully said: "Since you have come, let me tell you truthfully. Your fuel is not up to standard...."

"Why?"

"It contains impurities and can cause an explosion." This prematurely thanked head of the specialist advisory group spread out two hands and shook his head.

Sun Jixian was silent. Li Fuze asked: "By only relying on the laboratory test sheet and not looking at the fuel, how can it be determined as not being up to standard?"

Qierkuofu said: "Assistant Commander Li, you know, we are military people and only understand how to obey."

"You came to help us resolve technical problems and can technologically pull us up from the bottom." Li Fuze said "In order to make the laboratory tests precise, will you send a person to Jilin to extract a fuel sample and send it back to the Soviet Union for laboratory tests?"

"No. That is a Chinese matter. It is not convenient for us to go....." Qierkuofu seemed troubled.

Li Fuze said: "Its alright not to go to Jilin. How about if we transport the fuel and you do laboratory tests?"

"No" Qierkuofu shook his head again. "To tell you the truth, I am willing to help you to make the rocket but this involves the matters between two nations. Besides, there is also a question of responsibility here."

"The affairs of China are undertaken by ourselves and will certainly not let you take the responsibility." Sun Jixian's speech appeared somewhat searing.

Qierkuofu lowered his head, silently thought it over and said: "I am very sorry comrade Commander. Our superiors have

directions concerning this work and it is not suitable to meddle in..... " Qierkuofu left a sentence "extremely sorry" and then spoke of other things which cannot be reported.

Sun Jixian and Li Fuze are both hot-tempered yet they are also patient. They knew that Qierkuofu was only an executor and the person directing this "play" was above him.

After half a month, a sealed tank car full of fuel went from the northeast to the northwest Gobi. At that time, Li Fuze was in Beijing and when he heard this news he immediately returned. However, the Soviet specialist consulting group had already given the fuel the "death sentence" and believed that it was also our decision. Who would think that when he returned to the Gobi full of zest that the vast sea of sand next to the launching site would be burning to the heavens with flames. The raging fire was ablaze and reddened half the sky. Originally, after the fuel was transported there, Qierjuofu restated the judgement that "the fuel was not up to standard" and conveyed the "recommendation" to the higher authorities: the fuel provided by the Soviets would certainly be transported there within two months. Therefore, our train of fuel was to be poured into the sea of sand in vain.

Fuel, oh, fuel, this is the heart blood of the Chinese people. Li Fuze jumped down from the automobile, ran to the field of fire and dumbfoundedly gazed at the thick rolling smoke and suddenly knelt down and was choked with tears. A stream of tears dropped down on the burning sand. These were the tears of our Republic's general.

From the time the fuel was forced to be poured out, Li Fuze had faintly felt that in the sky above China and the Soviet Union a violent storm was fermenting yet he was not willing to think deeply about this and the busy military affairs did not allow him to expend a lot of time thinking about it. In order to receive

the fuel transported from the Soviet Union, even though he allowed the launching regiment to send people to Manzhouli he was still not at ease and several times inquired after news from the specialist consulting group. Qierkuofu would always very affirmatively say: "The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic is always very reputable. Our superiors indicated that the fuel would certainly be transported here according to the agreed time. Please be at ease Assistant Commander Li."

Be at ease? How could Li Fuze be at ease. In just a couple of days, he telephoned Beijing to inquire; in less than a week he sent a telegram to Manzhouli;.....but the two month agreement period had elapsed and the train transporting the fuel still had not appeared on the Beierjiasike Railway Line opposite Manzhouli.

The villent storms of Siberia had come early.

Li Fuze came to Beijing from the Great Gobi and as soon as he saw the Secretary-General at the National Defense Science Committee Office Administration Building he rushed over and asked: "The Soviet agreement has already expired so how is it that the fuel has still not arrived?"

"Its arrived."

"Really? When?" Li Fuze did not think that he would hear good news here.

The Secretary-General did not answer him but arranged a seat for him, gave him a cup of water and asked: "How about the morale of the troops?"

"All is ready except what is crucial....." Li Fuze said.

The Secretary-General gave a painful laugh and said: "The road to happiness is strewn with setbacks. Let me ask you, if an adopted son lacks milk can you feed him?"

One sentence solved the puzzle for Li Fuze. He raised his eyebrows and staring at the Secretary-General asked: "What did happen after all?"

"Well, can he be fed?"

"He can also be fed with rice gruel."

I believe you cannot be knocked down by an unexpected attack. The milk is cut off, thoroughly cut off. The Secretary-General pulled out a telegram from a filing cabinet, handed it to Li Fuze and said: "Read it yourself."

The Ministry of National Defense of the PRC: Due to an unavoidable accident at the Siberian Liquid Oxygen Plant, the agreement cannot be carried out---- the Ministry of National Defense of the USSR.

When he had finished reading it, Li Fuze had hot blood rushing to his brain for the rocket fuel which he and the officers and men had waited for so long had become a visionary hope, had completely turned into a visionary hope. Dignity, the dignity of a military man of a republic caused him to be unable to restrain his feelings and he suddenly stood up and said: "I'm going to Xizhimen to find the Soviet specialists to settle accounts."

"Let it pass. This is not related to the specialists. The key lies with the policymakers," the Secretary-General stopped, "This is totally to be expected. Helushaofu would even dare to dig up Stalin's grave. He does not have any regard for face."

Although Li Fuze earlier had a premonition about this, yet he did not think it would be this fast and abrupt.

This was a gloomy and cold Beijing night. The wind was

wailing and the rain and fog were dense. However, the Ziguang Pavilion in the South China Sea was a fiery scene.

A high level leadership meeting to determine the fate of China's first rocket troops was being held. Premier Zhou Enlai presided over the meeting and Marshal Peng Dehuai, Marshal Nie Rongqin and leading comrades of the National Defense Council also participated in the meeting.

This was an historical meeting.

Marshal Nie Rongqin said with a stern expression that he thought the stopping of the supply of fuel was not because of technical problems but was due to political causes.

"This bald head Helushaofu." Marshall Peng Dehuai indignantly said. Dead butcher Zhang does not even eat hairy pig. We Chinese are not molded out of clay and what we think is round is round and what we think is flat is flat.

Premier Zhou Enlai's two eyebrows shook and his gaze was deep and heavy. He said that the Soviet Union's attempt to use this method of blocking the fuel to strangle our rocket enterprise in the cradle could not be accomplished. We Chinese are a race with backbone, have abundant wisdom and no power can force us and no affair can put us in a difficult position.

Premier Zhou Enlai beat a red and blue pencil in his palm, calmed his voice and with an encouraging type of force said: the officers and men of the rocket troops unanimously request to use the Chinese made fuel and this is using split wood for combustion. They also want to send the rocket up. I agree with using our own fuel. What are your views?

"Agree," "agree," "agree."

Following this clammering of resolute voices, Premier Zhou Enlai saw the glittering hope and light of conviction in the eyes of Marshal Nie, Marshal Peng and each of the ardent leadership comrades.

"Good, unanimously passed" Premier Zhou said and using his large red pencil he solemnly wrote on the top margin of the petition by the rocket troops: agreed.

## Section Two

Among the Soviet specialists that made the deepest impression on the officers and men of the rocket troops were two other group heads of the specialist advisors, Colonel Xieliemofusiji and Lieutenant Kewaliaofu.

Li Fuze had participated in Kewaliaofu's rocket technology study group and he felt that among all of the Soviet specialists, the instructions given by Lieutenant Kewaliaofu were the most conscientious and his explanations and answers to questions posed by the students were the most concrete; Colonel Xieliemofusiji had often said to the students: if there are any problems which you do not understand, no matter what time it is come and look for me and I will come to the call.....

One day, Li Fuze and several technical personnel in the launching regiment had invited Kewaliaofu to give individual instruction and a young handsome specialist major about thirty years of age rushed in. Kewaliaofu was a first distracted and then switched the subject and began talking about the situation of the Siberian wind. Li Fuze was a bit puzzled about this and so after dinner that day he met Kewaliaofu on the basketball court. The two played and talked about the specialist major. Kewaliaofu said to Li Fuze: "I wanted to be a bit careful of this person." Our general understood.

Even though Lieutenant Kewaliaofu was extremely cautious, yet an unfortunate fate befell him.

On the "81" Army Day, the rocket troop organization held a dinner party and the Soviet specialists also attended. The specialist major was known for his excessive drinking. This time he drank a great deal and after a little while he was dead drunk. After eating, Lieutenant Kewaliaofu invited Li Fuze and several technical personnel to his dormitory for individual instructions. He opened up the bound blueprints and gave systematic explanations while our technical personnel recorded every word..... a marvelous rocket domain gradually unraveled before the eyes of our officers and men.

The brotherly friendship of the Soviet Union and China was fully realized here.

He did not expect the shadow like specialist major to appear at the window. His eyes which were bloodshot stared angrily at Kewaliaofu.

Lieutenant Kewaliaofu was silent.

The specialist major rushed in brandishing his fists and Li Fuze stepped forward to block him and shouted: "What are you doing?"

"He knows" said the specialist major shaking his fist at Kewaliaofu and jumping violently like a crazed bear.

"You should understand that professionally he is your superior" Li Fuze said angrily.

"Superior? What a laugh. Do you know what I do?"



"You are a specialist, how can I not know this?"

"No, I am not a specialist. I was a military attache in  
....."

"Oh, you are attached to the National Security Commission in charge of....." Li Fuze said understandingly.

After not sleeping that night, Li Fuze did not see Kewaliaofu for several days. He heard that Kewaliaofu had been criticized at a "living meeting" of the specialist advisory group.

Not long after, the Soviet expert Senior General Batuofu who was head advisor stationed in China's Ministry of Defense seized the special opportunity to come to the Gobi. This visit to see the specialist was actually to secretly give instructions for removal. He had just returned from Moscow and had received orders from the higher authorities for complete removal.

That evening, Batuofu participated in the special welcoming banquet given to him by the rocket troops. After three rounds of drinks and the exchange of amenities, Batuofu pointed at Colonel Xieliemofusiji and suddenly announced in front of everyone: "He will return to the Soviet Union tomorrow."

Colonel Xieliemofusiji was stunned and so was Sun Jixian. Li Fuze asked: "Why is this?"

Batuofu waved his hand and laughing said: "The Soviet Union needs people domestically."

"When will he leave?"

"Tomorrow."

"So urgent?"

"He will return with me to Beijing tomorrow and the day after tomorrow return to Moscow."

Sun Jixian and Li Fuze looked at Colonel Xieliemofusiji next to them with knitted brows and only saw that he was sitting there stunned staring silently at the bubbles in his wine cup, his deep blue eyes fixed and tears shining on his retina.

General Sun Jixian rose and said to Senior General Batuofu: "Our work here has just begun and we haven't finished implementing the agreement. How can Colonel Xieliemofusiji leave in the middle?"

Batuofu said: "This is a decision of the higher authorities. After he leaves, the Work Committee will replace him with another person."

How the wine was drunk after this and what Batuofu later said was entirely unclear to Sun Jixian and Li Fuze.

Colonel Xieliemufusiji was forced to return to the Soviet Union. Afterwards, groups of Soviet specialists were successively removed from the northwestern Gobi. Lieutenant Kewaliaofu also had to leave.

On a clear morning, Li Fuze got up early and was going to go to Kewaliaofu's residence to see him off. To his surprise, as soon as he walked out of his door he saw Kewaliaofu standing there not knowing how long he had been waiting for him.

Kewaliaofu silently nodded his head and lifted out an exquisite metal keepsake molded with the earth and a rocket and gave it to Li Fuze along with a lighter to which it was attached. "As a memento.."

Li Fuze accepted the gift, he tightly held Lieutenant

Kewaliaofu's hand and asked: "What are you preparing to do when you return?"

Kewaliaofu sighed and said: "What can I do? As you say in China "mend the earth! I will not be able to work again in the field of rockets." When he finished, tears were flowing from his eyes....

Not long after, the Party Central Committee announced the news to the people throughout China that the Helushaofu group had unilaterally torn up the contract and removed the specialists. It rolled in the air over China like a clap of thunder. This nation which in the past had always appeared to be the "old big brother" halted the assistance of over one hundred projects to China.

Our rocket troops had the greatest difficulties and entered its grimest times. The launching base which was just constructed and also many of the instruments and equipment were disgarded in the sea of sand; many facilities were built to half load and then halted;also essential technical materials and blueprints were carried away by the Soviet specialists....

Witnessing all of this was Assistant Commander Li Fuze and he felt like screaming and cursing but regrettably not a scream or curse was emitted concerning who made it so that we did not have rockets. This adopted son was after all unreliable and the key was to have one's own. He felt shame and pain and his face was red hot and scalding.

Lieutenant Kewaliaofu wrote a letter and Li Fuze opened the translated text and read:

I am writing to you from my hometown on the banks of the Don. Firstly, allow me to use the Russian convention to embrace you and kiss you.

I have already retired, left Moscow and returned to my hometown. As regards the reasons for my retirement, you already know and I will not repeat them here. I passed two short years in the northwest Gobi of your country and this was the first time I had crossed this heroic land with a cultural history of several thousand years. There, I excitedly saw you and your soldiers display devoted spirit which was extremely admirable. Even though I regret not seeing the sending up of a rocket on Chinese land yet I really believe that this day will come. There is a long standing and well established relationship between China and the Soviet Union and although there are dark clouds over the two countries, I still strongly believe that these dark clouds will disperse and that this abnormal situation will end.....

### Section Three

Beijing. The Office of Marshal Nie Rongqin.

Marshal Nie stood in front of the window and with heavy heart listened to the report by Li Fuze, his two deeply sunken eyes flashing with a worried light.

After the Soviet specialists left, the nation also encountered serious natural calamities, grain shortages and the rocket troops had feelings of insecurity and chaos.....the seething great Gobi was silent.

How could we let this enterprise which had just been started come to a premature end.

Marshal Nie gravely said: "Now the national economy is in a difficult situation and there are many problems which are not easily resolved. However, the rocket troops are a national treasure, a pyramid which cannot collapse. I think there is an expedient measure which is: decentralized livelihood."

"I agree with this method" Li Fuze said. "No matter what, the rocket troops must be preserved. The group of engineers can be disbanded, the guards regiment can be disbanded, the automobile regiment can also be disbanded..... lose a chariot to protect the general, 'you can't give up the child and can't fight the wolf'".

Marshal Nie decisively said: "The organization can be greatly retrenched, the families and children can all be sent inland and this can reduce the pressure of the troops. The soldiers of the troops will be sent to other military regions based on my report to the Military Commission.

Li Fuze said: "This can reduce 10,000 people."

Since the cuts were rather drastic, Marshal Nie then raised his voice: "However, there is one item which should be given attention to: the intellectuals, scientific and technical personnel and newly assigned college students cannot be reduced and no matter what, these people must be retained. They are the golden knot of our rocket enterprise. As long as the green hills are there, we need not worry about firewood. We must rely on them to send up rockets and when there are difficulties we must also retain them....."

Hearing Marshal Nie clammering in his strong Sichuan accent, Li Fuze felt an upsurge of emotion. A marshal who had such brilliant achievements during the war years was now commanding our national defense science and technical troops to begin a new long march. He must consider many problems; the clothing, feeding and housing of the troops completely filled his mind. In order for our republic's first young rocket troops to grow strong, he worked his heart out, labored day and night and so many gray hairs were added to his head. He is the father of our republic's rockets.

Li Fuze stood up and laughingly said: "Marshal Nie, I can get your 'imperial sword' and return to kill and hack."

"Fine" said Marshal Nie with a hearty laugh.

When returning to the Gobi, Li Fuze immediately made a report to Commander Sun Jixian and afterwards they held an emergency meeting. That year, an enormous group of 10,000 officers and men pushed forward into the Gobi and what about the lofty enthusiasm which they embodied? Now, bidding goodbye to the Gobi without one's lofty aspirations unrealized was indeed a painful matter.

One train after another carrying demobilized troops departed; one train after another carrying families and children departed; one train after another carrying personnel employed for odd jobs in the organization and cultural troupes departed.....

In the many days that passed, Li Fuze was busy sending off this dense mass of people. He stood on the railway platform filled with sand, consumed by a great wave of emotion, looking at the soldiers and waving tearful farewells to them as well as their families and children. He also cried looking at the sight of the wind blowing violently at the train windows.

One clear morning, Li Fuze took a train to a regiment implementing the "decentralized livelihood" measures. He wanted the regiment leader to call the technical cadres to roll call. The technical cadres all came and there was only a newly assigned graduate from the "Harbin Military Engineering College" who was missing.

"People?" Li Fuze inquired of the regiment leader.

The regiment leader lowered his head and did not speak.

How is it you're not saying anything?"

"Already left...."

"Who allowed you to let him go?" Li Fuze further inquired.

"The masses expressed that his.....expression was bad....." The regiment leader said evasively, "All day he dug into the books, was not very hardworking....relatively lazy..... he also contradicted the leader....."

Li Fuze was angry: "You take this as a fault? He is an intellectual. Three of you couldn't be traded for him. When did he leave?"

"Last night. I can't say for certain..... he still hasn't boarded the train....."

"I order you to immediately catch up with him and bring him back....."

The college student was finally brought back.

As soon as he saw him, Li Fuze laughed as he had earlier had "friendly relations" with this college student. This college student had just been assigned to the launching troops and on his first day was working at the launching site. Li Fuze himself came to stroll at his position. He was not very fussy about his clothing and this college student mistakenly took him for a "suspicious character" and brought him to the regiment office. When the student heard from the regiment leader's mouth that this "suspicious character" was the Assistant Commander, he was at a loss what to do. However, Li Fuze praised him on the spot.

Three days later, the regiment leader brought this college student before Li Fuze and he presented a written self-criticism. Li Fuze tore it up: "Excused just this once." Later, he

earnestly and sincerely said: "Intellectuals are a valuable group in our rocket enterprise. Afterwards there will not be any trouble in regard to this problem....."

#### Section Four

Hunger like the shadow of a demon enveloped the vast Gobi. Li Fuze came to Beijing. He originally wanted to look for Liu Yalou, Commander of the Airforce and President of the Fifth Design Institute of the National Defense Science Committee but he had not expected that before we could open his mouth he would first be "criticized."

"Your troops have done some mischief" Liu Yalou said puzzling Li Fuze and then he pulled out a red document from the pile of documents on his desk and gave it to Li Fuze. "The local government made accusations about you to the State Council. Look for yourself....."

This was a situational report of the local government transmitted to the State Council which said that a certain regiment of the rocket troops had cut down narrow leaved oleaster trees in more than 30 kilometers of forest while stationed there..... when Li Fuze had finished reading this, he objected and laughed: "Our troops have always observed strict discipline and could not have done this. They are also speaking a bit too critically."

"Destroying over 30 kilometers of forest isn't critical?" Liu Yalou was even more unhappy. "This is a formal report from people at one level of government and it is not a joke, my comrade. The Party Committee of the Science Committee has already studied it and after you return you will investigate it clearly, handle it strictly and report the process results to the Party Committee of the Science Committee."

Although Li Fuze flatly denied it, yet the next morning when



he returned to the base he took a train to make an on the spot investigation. He found that the situation reported by the local government was true: the strip of forest of narrow leaved oleaster like a long continuous screen had been cut down and there were branches and leaves scattered about. He exploded and shouted: "It is simply mischief."

As soon as he returned to the troop organization's office building he immediately telephoned the leader of the regiment and told him to rush over.

"Did you cut down the forest of narrow leaved oleaster?" Li Fuze spurted out to the leader.

The leader nodded his head.

"Why didn't you ask for instructions?..... Did you approve it?"

The camp commander sought me out and I agreed."

"Trees are the life of the Gobi sands, don't you understand this? You have done much serious damage, where did the organizational discipline go?" Li Fuze angrily said, "The local government reported you to the State Council. You go find the people and apologize."

The regiment leader did not say a word.

"Say something. I ask you, what were you doing cutting down that narrow leaved oleaster forest?" "Eating to our fill....."

"Assistant Commander...." he had just begun to speak and his eyes became tearful, "The food supply for the entire regiment was only sufficient for one week....."

"....." Li Fuze was stunned.

"In order to tide over this crisis, the soldiers proposed grinding the oleaster leaves into powder which can be mixed in with grain and eaten....then....." the regiment leader choked with sobs and couldn 't continue.

Li Fuze gave a long sigh: "How long did you eat the oleaster leaves for?"

"We have already eaten them....five days....."

Such tenacious soldiers. Such valuable national spirit. When our republic's rocket enterprise has years of difficulty, they silently withstand the wind and sand of the times and fight bravely on the launching site.

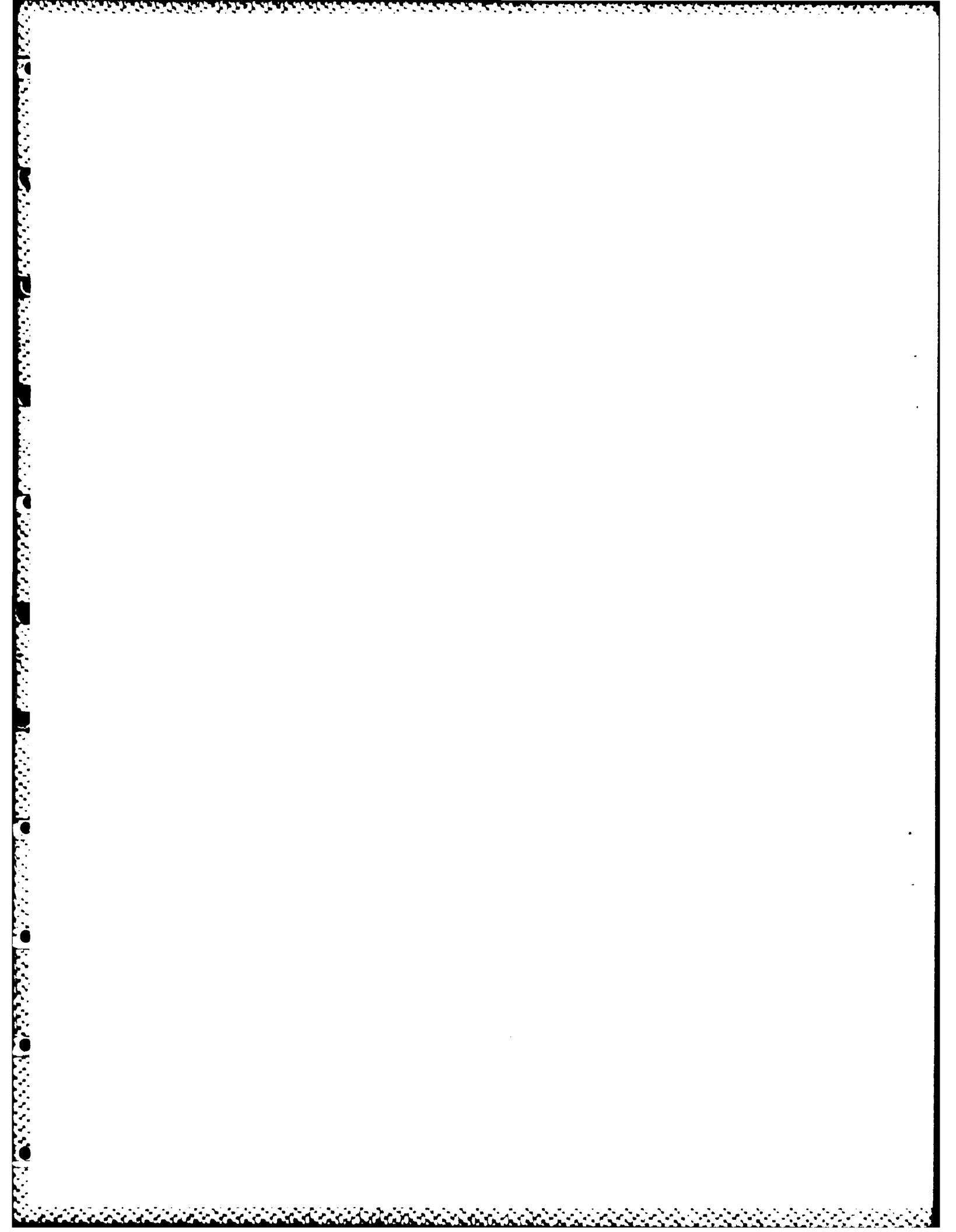
Li Fuze was silent for a long time and then lightly waving his hand said: "Okay, no need to further investigate this matter. I have not done well as Assistant Commander. I will write an investigative report to the higher authorities and you return and thank the comrades for me....."

Food, food. Resolving the problem of food has become a matter of extreme urgency for the rocket troops.

At this time, a meeting of the Military Commission of the Central Committee was being held in Beijing. Li Fuze rushed into the house of General Yang Chengwu, Chief of the General Staff and requested that he resolve the food problem.

Yang Chengwu said: "Everyone is have difficulties now. I will report your request to the Premier and let him think of a way. No matter what, tighten your belt and the rocket troops will be ensured."

That night, the lights in Zhou's office burned until dawn and the news of the rocket troops running out of food deeply moved



him. When he heard that the soldiers had begun to eat oleaster leaves, he didn't speak for a long time. He slowly walked to the telephone, picked it up and said: "Give me the Ministry of Grain."

The call went through. Premier Zhou Enlai understood the situation of the grain stock and then slowly hung up the telephone. That was related to the stock of the national economy and the people's livelihood and it couldn't be further drawn upon.

The next morning, Premier Zhou came to the conference hall of the meeting of the Military Commission of the Central Committee and as soon as he made his appearance he said with a heavy heart: "Comrades, I have not come today to give instructions but to "beg a meal."

The entire meeting was solemn.

Premier Zhou said: "At present, the rocket troops will soon run out of food..... they are an important group in our armed forces. Their undertaking is directly related to the development of national defense work and I hope that each large military region will care for them as brothers. Tighten the belts and support them..... the news of their running out of food has just been related to me. To let the soldiers go hungry, as Premier I must apologize to everyone and also the the rocket troops.....

Wuiet, quiet. The entire meeting listened with bated breath to the heart sounds of the Premier of our republic.

Premier Zhou said: "Our national economy is now facing serious difficulties. Chairman Mao has not eaten meat for a long time. I hope the comrades of the rocket troops overcome the difficulties, pass the critical problem of food and send up a rocket early so

as to actually thank the brothers for their support.

This is the call of the times, the nation and history. The heart of the Premier of the State Council was closely linked with the rocket officers and men.

Premier Zhou appeared personally to "beg a meal" and attained an ardent response from those at the meeting. A month later the first full train carrying grain and dried vegetables which was aid from each military region left Beijing and whistled on to the great northwest.

The train passed Xian and Lanzhou, traversed the Zhangye and at dusk stopped at a small desolate station for water. At this time, an unexpected incident occurred. Nearly one hundred famine victims carrying bags and twig baskets swarmed forward, rushed on to the railroad cars, ripped open the grain sacks and lifted the vegetable bindings.....the soldiers responsible for escorting the goods were unable to control this crowd stealing the grain no matter what they did.

"They won't stop, fire a gun."

"Ping, ping, ping" the gun rang out three times resounding into the sky above the great Gobi.

The crowd stealing the grain ran off in all directions but very little of the grain and dried vegetables remained.

A long distance call was made to Li Fuze's office, he was silent for a moment and then said: "Unload the remaining grain and dried vegetables and distribute it to the local masses."

"This is the lifeblood of our troops."

"Carry out orders."

The railroad cars were opened and the remaining grain and vegetables were given to the local masses. This action deeply moved them and with the aid of the regional government the people who had stolen the food gradually returned it. Among them, an aged peasant knelt on his knees and eyes brimming with tears said: "I was just told about the matter in the country that this is life saving food for the troops. We should mind our own business and you mind yours. For our own people to harm our own people is a crime...."

The escort soldiers helped the man up and couldn't help but shed warm tears. During this time of famine and distress our people were so honest and tolerant, magnanimous and upright.

Three days later, the train entered the Gobi. Li Fuze rushed to the spot and filled with emotion said to the soldiers: "This is the hard saved food from older big brother troops with half empty intestines. We must treasure it as if treasuring life....."

The grain and dried vegetables were sent to each unit. The comrades of the kitchen squad opened the vegetable bindings and were startled: They only saw grain coupons inserted inside. The larger ones were for three and five jin and the smaller ones were for two and three liang. There were accompanying notes with the donors names written on them. Among them, one note was from a third year female student of a certain regiment of the Wuhan troops who wrote: "Uncles and aunts of the rockets troops: I heard that you had nothing to eat and so now would like to send you two liang grain coupons which I saved from school breakfasts. Please accept them...."

Such sincere emotions. This is our people and this is the basic reason our enterprise will certainly succeed.

The long awaited spring arrived. The spring of 1960 is a

hard one to forget.

The Party Committee of the rocket troops decided that aside from organizing a small hunting party to go to Qilian Mountain to hunt Mongolian gazelle, they would appeal to all of the officers and men to mobilize to dig up wild vegetables to tide over the lean year as well as bring under cultivation this piece of virgin land which had lied unused for millions of years to demand grain from this sea of sand.

The lamas of the lamasery used their own religious ceremonies and zealously welcomed the rocket officers and men. They saw with their own eyes how the soldiers braved the more than 30 degrees below zero bitter cold and chiselled ice to draw water which revived the ancient wasteland; how they ate hard wild vegetable dumplings, dug out red willows and pulled up tents; how they dragged their rope and pulled plows and spread seeds of life.....

The life of doing pioneering work is extremely bitter. In order to expand the experience of the "melon and vegetable generation," the troops held a camel thorn banquet: camel thorn dough figurines in the form of meat, camel thorn dough dumplings, camel thorn steamed bread, camel thorn cakes, camel thorn Mongolian gazelle stuffed buns.....a large variety which was a feast for their eyes. The special creations of this special time seemed to be inseparable from camel thorn.

During the summer of that year, Li Fuze went to Beijing to see Marshal Nie Rongqin and specially sent several Hami melons produced by the troops. When it was reported that the rocket troops were passing bitter years relying on camel thorn, the Marshall laughed and nodded continually praising: "Good, good, good. We should give a meritorious award to the camel thorn and thank it for rearing the rocket troops....."

## Section Five

Marshal Nie Rongqin came to the northwest Gobi from Beijing.

It was already deep into the night and under a dull moon Sun Jixian and Li Fuze strolled with Marshal Nie near the troop hospital when suddenly they heard the low and slow sound of a flute. Like a clear breeze blowing and spring water burbling, Marshal Nie was deeply fascinated. He heard the famous tune "Suwu Tends Sheep." This dreary historical story and tune which everyone knows tugged at the heartstrings of them all. He lifted his head and looking around saw only a person sitting on a not very distant sand hill. This person was the origin of the flute sounds.

Marshal Nie and the generals walked on with heartfelt emotions. The person playing the flute was an older soldier. He didn't seem to have noticed the people coming and continued to play his long flute. The emotional flute music penetrated very far in the quiet night air.

"Are you with the cultural troupe?" asked Li Fuze.

"No, the launching regiment." The old soldier stopped playing turned his head but did not lift his eyes to look at them.

Li Fuze looked closely by means of the moonlight and oblique rays from the light on the building. This old soldier playing the flute had night blindness.

"How long have you been in the hospital?" asked Marshal Nie showing concern.

"Three months."

"How many people in your regiment have this type of disease?"



"Over thirty and even more have edema."

"How many?"

"Over seventy....."

Marshal Nie slightly nodded his head and then gave a long sigh.

Sun Jixian and Li Fuze accompanied Marshal Nie to the hospital ward. The patients were at first surprised and then enthusiastically gathered around. Marshal Nie looked at each of the emaciated and pale faces with sheens of suffering flashing in their eyes.

At this time, the old soldier who was playing the flute returned to the ward. He excitedly and blindly extended his two arms and said: "Senior officer, just then I didn't know you....."

Marshal Nie grabbed his hand and holding it tightly said: "You play the flute very well. When did you learn?"

"In Korea."

"You have been to Korea?" Marshal Nie took a look at the flute and saw that it was made from a discarded gun.

"How many comrades-in-arms of you are together?"

The old soldier began to cry and with deep remorse said: "Nearly all of the comrades-in-arms in my unit were sacrificed on the Korean battlefield, only seven remain, three in the launching regiment and four are in other regiments...."

That evil aggressive war.

"Senior officer....." the old soldier said with a trembling voice, "They all died because our weapons were backward which allowed the American planes to bomb and kill them on high ground. If we do not have any new weapons this will only let people beat our asses. The Soviet specialists have gone and some people say that our rocket troops will be discontinued and so we won't be able to produce our own rockets. Thus, in the future when we fight we will again be at a disadvantage..... "

So many good soldiers, so many soldiers rich in foresight and sagacity. This is the call of the fortunate survivors of bloody and fiery war.

Marshal Nie listened to the burning hot words of the soldiers as he sat on the side of a bed and continually nodding his head said: "The views of you comrades are very good and are equivalent to embarrassing me and embarrassing our comrades who excessively believe in foreigners. In the past, the rocket troops were set up here and on the north is the Soviet Union. Some people say this is having the back lean on a soft sofa. Now, the sofa allowed people to move away; we still have chairs and we can sit as before. It is not good to only rely on the charity of others but we should be self-reliant. When we sit in our own chairs, our minds are then steady and sure."

Marshal Nie's speech amused the patients and they laughed heartily.

Marshal Nie looked around at each of the men and said: "At present, China is developing rockets itself and very soon they will leave the factory. Rockets appear when the nation expends piles of gold. When the nation has serious difficulties, we must still draw the funds to allow us to produce rockets and this is not easy. Whether or not they go up depends on the comrades. Recently, Premier Zhou said: "This matter has great effects on the nation and the world. It cannot be done carelessly and no

matter what, we must strive for its success. Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee are waiting for good news from us and the people of China also await our good news...."

Marshal Nie sat among the patients speaking with fervor and assurance shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart with the rocket officers and men. The feelings of Marshal Nie and the soldiers were sincerely exchanged here. The old soldier who played the flute thought of the "81" Day and Marshal Nie watched them. The dinner party was held on the Gobi sands outside the tent, four stones supported a small blackboard which was used as the "dining table." Marshal Nie, squeezed among the soldiers near the wind and sands of the Gobi and trying the fragrant and sweet local products which was the cuisine of the soldiers, continually praised: "The flavor is good." This was a marshal of the republic who had been in campaigns in the north and south and it was the actual portrayal of the marshal and soldiers who had undergone the bitter years of the rocket enterprise together.

Before departure, Marshal Nie went and shook hands with the patients and lastly slapping the shoulder of the old soldier who played the flute he said: "Comrade, in the past you were heroes on the Korean battlefield and now are also heroes in the bitter struggle to initiate the rocket enterprise. Heroes and comrades, thank you...."

#### Section Six

The units of the base were numbered. One day, Li Fuze and Li Juemin, head of a certain test department came to a place called "little number five" while examining communications installations.

Li Juemin was originally the head of the Communications Office and each communications point number on this thousand mile desert was condensed from his blood and sweat. In earlier years, he had

studied in an old-style private school and there was a great amount of "ink" in his belly. This was added to the fact that he had a straightforward character and when he had free time he would often sing two parts of a village play and wait for his colleagues to laugh hysterically. Li Fuze jokingly called him the "carefree department head."

This "small number five" was extremely small and if one sneezed one could miss the entire place. Now, all around the "small number five" were planted poplars and narrow leaved oleasters so that the green shadows covered the ground and it was flourishing and beautiful.

Li Fuze said: "This area has been administered well. Well, how is it compared to staying at Hainan Island?"

"Hainan Island is beautiful, the Gobi sands are vigorous, Heaven is in the south and earth in the north, each has a flavor in the mind."

"I didn't know that the carefree department head could compose poetry" Li Fuze said laughing. "I am not prepared to leave here in my lifetime. I will die in the Gobi sands and be buried in the green mountains."

"Then we should construct a 'happiness tree' in the Gobi sands to allow me to be the first 'tree chief' to come here."

Both of them laughed with abandon.

The life was harsh. Hunger like an evil rope clutched the throats of the rocket officers and men. Many years of calamity and hardship tested each of the lives in the aerospace city.....

In the days when there was serious grain shortage, this "carefree department head" who could talk and laugh and handle

matters lost over thirty kilograms of body weight. His eyes were sunken, his cheekbones protruded out, his whole face was haggard, he walked haltingly and indirectly resembled a wind dried diversiform-leaved poplar. This staunch fellow strongly endured hunger and struggled on the 100 mile communications line with stubborn faith and welcomed the challenge of life.

One day, he drove an automobile to the protruding mountains not far from the launching site to examine the radar installations. When he had just walked to the foot of the mountain, he felt his hungry stomach rumbling and that he had no energy throughout his body. He dragged his edemic legs and filled a military stachel with vegetables and diversiform-leaved poplar leaves, went to the riverside to wash them and then devoured it ravenously. After one-half hour, he felt that a thousand arrows pierced his heart, large beads of sweat oozed from his forehead and then he fell over and rolled on the side of the road. When the soldiers saw this they immediately lifted him up and took him to the hospital. After diagnosis, it was found to be food poisoning from the wild vegetables.....

When Li Fuze heard the news, he rushed over to the hospital to find the hospital head and chief doctor to order them to try every means to save the life of this critically ill tough man.

As it went, it was hard to believe that after being saved Li Juemin revived very quickly and after two days could get out of bed and walk around. This brought tears of joy from his wife who had rushed there from Jinan in Shandong.

As soon as Li Fuze heard this news, he then happily wrapped dumplings with Li Juemin's wife.

Li Fuze said: "I thought I wouldn't see you. To tell you the truth, the wreaths have all been prepared."

"Did you think I really wanted to be the tree chief of the 'happiness tree'? I still want to live to see our first rocket go up." Li Juemin was still the carefree type.

"This 'happiness tree' does not want you."

"Nor will I go to the great sedan chair carried by eight people."

Li Fuze told him: "The 'Number One East Wind' rocket developed by China has already been transported to the launching site and is to be launched. This is exciting people and from the day they rode camels into the Gobi they have looked forward to this day. Several tens of thousands of officers and men have sacrificed and struggled for the early arrival of this day. Rockets, our miraculous 'Number One East Wind' embraces the sweet dreams of so many rocket officers and men."

Li Juemin said excitedly: "I am fighting to leave the hospital early and return to the launching site."

"You take good care of your illness, don't be in such a hurry....."

"There are so many matters awaiting me, how can I not be anxious?"

Li Fuze rose and said farewell and Li Juemin insisted on sending him off. These two comrades-in-arms who had gone through thick and thin together talked and laughed loudly as they left the hospital walking through the large white corridors. When they spoke of the joke concerning the "small number five" striving to be the tree chief of the "happiness tree," Li Juemin rocked back and forth with laughter and his laughter could be heard at a great distance. Suddenly the laughter stopped and Li Fuze turned around in astonishment only to see Li Juemin

lying flat on his back on the floor of this long corridor.

Our "carefree department head" - this old comrade who had participated in the revolution in 1938 and had a heart attack from overexcitement in those long laughs was a comrade-in-arms who had dreams with him of the "Number One East Wind," whose wife was immersed in it with him and who had shared all of the joys and sorrows was hastily taken away forever.

Even though we see the many different situations in the records of heroes, there are different modes of tragic and moving departures in death; nonetheless, Li Juemin did not have earth-shaking magnificent feats or heroism. The famous scientist Qian Xuesen praised the rocket officers and men in this way: "Our aerospace enterprise shakes all of China and the whole world. Who knows the silent sacrifice they have made in this desolate and uninhabited great Gobi. The new great wall of our national defense is being constructed on the shoulders and hands of the likes of this sincere and honest soldier who is like a cobblestone."

Hero Li Juemin is a firm cornerstone on the new great wall of national defense.

"Happiness tree." Standing for a long time in front of the tombstone were the wife of the hero and several hundred soldiers; an entire rocket troop mourned the hero....

".....from today on no matter where we go we will never forget: in the autumn of 1960, an outstanding member of the Chinese Communist Party and commander of the rocket troops fell here....." The ears of each person resounded with the outbursts of crying by Li Fuze, "With the lapse of time, people will perhaps not speak of his many achievements and yet his sacrifice will never be forgotten....."

## Section Seven

The bright morning glow dyed the vast Gobi red. The magnificent launching site had a "Number One East Wind" rocket towering on it like a long sword leaning against the sky sticking straight up into the firmament. The time for the launch was approaching and the base was very quiet. Goshawk circled and screamed in the blue sky. The camel thorn, sagsaoul, diversiform-leaved poplar and splendid achnatherum sang as they gently swayed. The snow peak of Qilian was like a silver haired old man quietly waiting for this world shaking moment to come.

Marshal Nie Rongqin and the famous scientist Qian Xuesen had taken a special vehicle here yesterday. Accompanied by Sun Jixian and Li Fuze they inspected the technical positions and launching site and inquired after every detail. Marshal Nie asked with deep concern: "Can it be launched on schedule?"

"It will not be postponed" replied Commander Sun Jixian.

Qian Xuesen warned: "There is no way to predict it. We can fail because this is science."

The alarm to leave the area sounded. Marshal Nie and the generals took a vehicle to the command post....

"Thirty minutes and preparing."

"Ten minutes and preparing."

"One minute and preparing."

Launch time had arrived. For this very short moment to arrive, our nation, our people, our rocket officers and men had all paid an enormous price.



"....9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3...."

Li Fuze stood on the command platform as if placing his body on the forward position of a great battle. He used his right hand to hold the telephone receiver and only felt how heavy the small receiver was. His lips were shaking and he seemed to use all of his energy. Facing the large spacious hall, he shouted out: "Ignition."

A rumbling sound shook the vast wilderness as well as the minds of the rocket officers and men who only saw a large bright red tide slowly sweep along the entire launching site like a tremendous wave pushing the air. Our republic's "Number One East Wind" rocket rose up in this rolling wave of gas and slowly ascended into the clear sky and gradually slanted, turned and flew off deep into the great desert. After several minutes, the rocket exploded in a predetermined impact area and a column of smoke rose up and rushed against the sky.

"Success, success."

This was an historical cheer.

Marshal Nie Rongqin and Qian Xuesen were filled with excited tears and turned towards Commander Sun Jixian and Assistant Commander Li Fuze of these heroic troops to congratulate them. However, Li Fuze did not extend his hand soon enough and excitedly fell paralyzed on a chair.

".....Not long ago, this was the hostel of the Soviet specialists; today, it became the victorious location of our "Number One East Wind" rocket. Marshal Nie Rongqin happily drank a cup of wine and enthusiastically toasted the rocket officers and men, the excited toasts spreading to the entire banquet hall; within the short time after the Soviet specialists had departed the eastern horizon had seen the flight of our

own rocket and this was an important turning point in the weapons history of China....

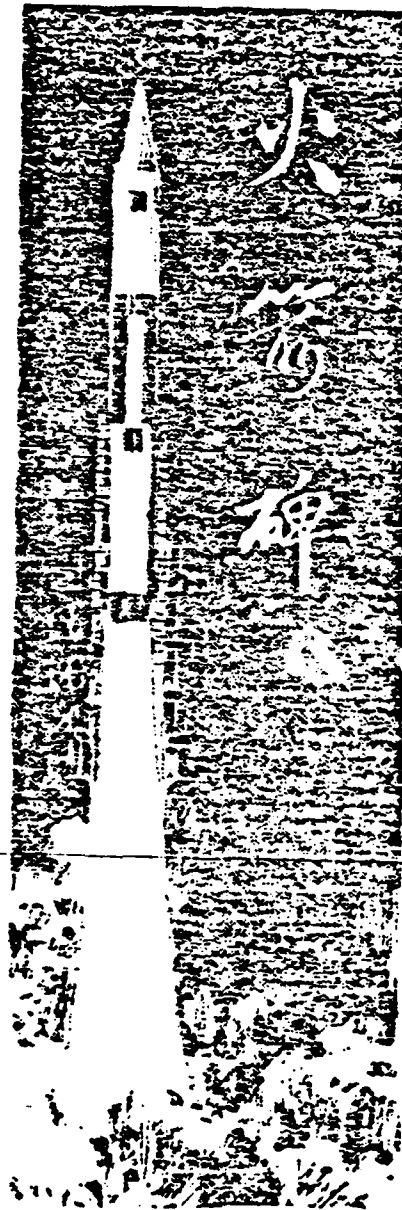
Ah, the "East Wind Model" has allowed us to have pride. What does this resounding name signify? The surging Yellow River, rolling Changjiang, high Himalayan Mountains, awesome great wall, Zu Chongzhi, Xu Xiake, Zhang Qian, Lin Zexu..... the iron heels, military ships, guns and "the Chinese dogs cannot enter" of the foreigners..... our ancient eastern nation of several thousand years of culture and ancient eastern national of several thousand years of repeated enslavement and insult. You are the first ancient nation in the world to caste a spiritual sword and this cannot totally explain the situation. The red silk of the "four great inventions" cannot cover the history of a people being backward; spirited triumphant methods cannot win future triumphs in the war against aggression. We must also have atomic bombs, hydrogen bombs, intercontinental missiles, satellites and spacecraft.....and use the accumulated strength of strategic weapons and the aerospace enterprise to protect the sacredness and honor of our ancient civilization.

The deep areas of the great desert, the launching site, the towering launching tower and a powerful arm are used to pull up a dazzling spirit of the sun. It is indeed like a monument of golden light projecting in all directions with the heroic names of rocket martyrs carved on its body.

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(Front and inserted pictures; Chen Yuxian).



Front picture



Inserted picture

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